

# Bureau of Water Supply Protection's Technical Assistance Program

By Robert A. Swider Jr., P.E., NYSDoH  
Bureau of Water Supply Protection

**A** mission of the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is to protect and promote the health of the citizen's of New York State. Within the NYSDOH, the Bureau of Water Supply Protection (BWSP) has the primary responsibility for assuring that safe, potable water, in adequate quantities, is provided in New York State. This is accomplished through:

- Oversight of local water supply regulatory programs;
- Training and certification of water supply operators;
- Maintenance of a statewide database on individual public water systems;
- Development and initiation of enforcement policies;
- Plan review;
- Maintenance of a water quality surveillance program; and
- Providing technical assistance (TA) to both local regulatory units and water suppliers

New York State is unique because it is a "Home Rule" State. Programs and policies are administered and regulated by the Local Health Departments (LHD's). In New York State, LHD's consist of thirty-six County Health Departments, nine State District Offices, and a City Health Department. Together these LHD's serve the sixty-one counties of New York State. When LHD resources are depleted, the BWSP technical assistance (TA) program can be utilized.

The BWSP's TA program has evolved over the past decade from a "Self Help" program to a true TA program. The self-help approach encouraged small communities to utilize resources (human, material, and financial) and tools within the community to solve local problems and reduce the cost of drinking water projects. Self-help is still practiced, however it may not be feasible for the communities that do not have the resources or experience.

When a water system is out of compliance, they don't know how to correct their problem and where to secure affordable funding. Communities without municipal infrastructure don't know where to get started. Many times the communities must spend some money to evaluate the problem or receive a commitment for funding. Many communities can't spend this "up front" money without knowing what they are getting into.

Today, the BWSP's TA program focuses on those communities with no experience or resources. Local elected officials, water operators and residents are educated on their options; technically, financially, and managerially. Assistance

may include: preliminary engineering, pre-applications for funding, and guidance throughout the project. Public health benefits, as well as public health concerns, are discussed with the community at public information meetings and provided in writing.

To supplement the TA program, the BWSP recently awarded a contract to the New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA) to provide technical assistance to small community and non-community water systems throughout New York State. Two full time circuit riders (TA providers) will serve as technical resources for the BWSP in a non-regulatory role. The contract is for one year with (2) one year extensions, possible. The assistance they will provide includes, but is not limited to:

- Assisting small PWS's with compliance;
- Identifying, evaluating and troubleshooting PWS problems/violations;
- Educating water operators, municipal officers, elected officials and system owners;
- Providing necessary training (on-site or in a class room forum);
- Assisting with the development of Emergency Response Plans;
- Assisting small PWS's with security and vulnerability assessments;
- Assisting small PWS's in developing a rate structure;
- Collecting water samples for analysis;
- Evaluating PWS's current operating procedures;
- Locating funding and assisting with funding applications; and
- Coordinating activities with other Technical Assistance providers.

For more information on New York State's TA program, please contact:

Robert A. Swider Jr., P.E.  
BWSP TA Coordinator  
Flanigan Square  
547 River Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
(518) 402-7676  
ras04@health.state.ny.us 